



The 2024 Alabama House Democratic Caucus
Legislative Agenda

VISION FOR PROGRESS

The Alabama House Democratic Caucus proudly presents their 2024 Legislative Agenda: **Vision for Progress**. Building and expanding upon the success of the 2023 Plan for Prosperity agenda, our **Vision for Progress** prioritizes legislation and policies that will produce positive progress and substantive, measurable results for all Alabamians. We define progress as performing deliberate and meaningful action to significantly improve the quality of life for all who live in our great state. To achieve this **Vision for Progress** we must expand economic opportunity, ensure universal access to affordable health care, strengthen educational achievement, increase voter and civic participation, and guarantee our justice system is fair and humane to all.

Our **Vision for Progress** is predicated on our American concept of freedom; whereby every citizen enjoys the right to act, speak, or think as they wish without hindrance or restraint, but only within the rule of law. Freedom that honors diversity, cherishes inclusion, and demands equity, so that we all may prosper, thrive, and flourish. Freedom to pursue our dreams and ambitions, while solemnly recognizing our responsibility to create a better Alabama for generations to come. **This is our Vision for Progress to maximize your freedom and empower your future.**



Expand Economic Opportunity

The Alabama House Democratic Caucus vision to expand economic opportunity is a pro-growth model of investment focused on creating higher wages, reducing the tax burden on family-owned businesses and ensuring that companies, large and small, have access to the human and capital resources they need to innovate and thrive. In order to achieve economic prosperity, we must improve workforce participation by greatly increasing access to affordable housing, transportation, and childcare, particularly in rural Alabama. We shall continue our efforts to close the income gap and implement vocational training opportunities to give job-seekers the updated skills they need for success in today's ever-changing and high-tech workplace. We strongly support increased investment in Alabama's infrastructure to not only improve conditions in our local communities, but to attract entrepreneurial and emerging businesses that will fuel our long-term economic growth.

To expand economic opportunity, we must also guarantee fairness and equity in the bidding process for government contracts, economic development incentives, and state procurement contracts. This must include provisions in our legislation that encourage participation of minority-owned and women-owned businesses with transparency and accountability. **We know that economic freedom means that your hard work should be rewarded and that you should have access to the resources and opportunities you need for success.**



Ensure Access to Affordable Health Care

In order for Alabama to achieve this bold vision for progress, it is essential that every citizen has access to affordable health care within their local community. We must close the health insurance gap that negatively affects hundreds of thousands of Alabamians and their families. Alabama House Democrats urge the immediate expansion of Medicaid, as well as innovative public-private partnerships that seek to expand medical services throughout Alabama. As more hospitals risk permanent closure and access to specialized medical services decrease in our state, we support targeted incentives to ensure that we attract and retain medical professionals and substantially increase the amount of health care providers, especially in our rural communities. We must continue our efforts to combat the scourge of substance abuse and mental illness by increasing our investments in treatment, recovery, counseling, and evidence-based mental health services.

We recognize that an individual's health is directly correlated to public health, which is why we must ensure clean drinking water, effective sanitation systems, and excellent environmental health statewide, regardless of a community's geography, population density, demographics, or per capita income. We must safeguard and expand maternal care, infant care, and women's health, including the repeal of Alabama's draconian abortion ban that provides no exceptions for rape or incest. **We know that to fully enjoy the promise of freedom, you and your family must have local access to the health care you need, choose, and deserve.**



Strengthen Educational Achievement

Alabama House Democrats support increased investments in public education because it is singularly the greatest, most equitable, and proven path toward lifelong achievement, greater earning potential, and overall well-being. We steadfastly oppose unaccountable school choice voucher schemes that seek to defund public education and use taxpayer dollars to increase the profits of private schools. These schemes unfairly reward those who can already afford private education, while they ignore the needs of rural Alabama, children with disabilities, financially struggling families, and the common sense, critical necessity for standardized benchmarks to accurately gauge academic performance. We must build upon the best practices of Alabama's renowned Pre-K program and implement those demonstrably effective protocols and innovations to close the achievement gap in high school and beyond. We oppose the injection of

political, ideological, or religious agendas into public school curricula that attempt to distort or whitewash our collective and accepted historical truths.

Not only must we protect and expand our investments in public education, we must also ensure that educational funding and resources are shared fairly and effectively. This means directing additional and targeted resources to underperforming schools and providing struggling students with individualized instruction to close the educational achievement gap. We must ensure that Alabama public schools are safe for our children and that means funding additional security, violence prevention programs, and increasing parental involvement. No child should ever fear for their safety in the classroom. We strongly support the expansion of needs-based scholarships for post-secondary education and vocational training. We also support programs that prepare students for “middle-skill” jobs that require a high school education, but not a four-year degree. **We know that the blessing of freedom is not compatible with the curse of ignorance and that for all of us to fully enjoy the vast benefits of freedom, a quality education is essential and transformational.**



Increase Voter and Civic Participation

Alabama House Democrats understand that a healthy democracy and an effective government require abundant voter participation and informed civic engagement. Yet unnecessary obstacles prevent many citizens from fulfilling those basic responsibilities and necessary obligations of citizenship. We will always champion making voting easier and more accessible by allowing automatic voter registration upon the age of 18, curbside voting, early voting, and guaranteed absentee voting. Regardless of political affiliation, we all benefit when more people vote. We also strongly believe that we must expedite the restoration of voting rights to those who have paid their debt to society by removing fee, fines, or other obstacles as a condition to the restoration of their sacred right to vote.

To increase voter participation, we must also support efforts to educate voters and to ensure that the elderly, disabled, and infirm can also exercise their right to vote without undue obstacles or constraint. We must protect our election officials from political interference or threats of violence and make sure that they have the equipment and resources to prevent long lines or

unnecessary confusion at the polls that may deter legally eligible citizens from exercising their right to vote. We agree with the federal judges in *Milligan v. Allen* who declared, "Voting is the beating heart of democracy. It is a fundamental right, because it is preservative of all other rights." **We know that our freedom as Americans, and citizens of Alabama, is predicated on our right to vote in free, fair, and honest elections.**



Fair and Humane Criminal Justice Reform

The Alabama House Democratic Caucus strongly supports immediate and comprehensive reforms to our broken criminal justice system that has historically violated basic human rights and dignity. This has resulted in unprecedented and racially disproportionate incarceration and punishment while unnecessarily overcrowding our prisons and demonstrably failing to significantly deter crime or reduce recidivism. We advocate legislation that will provide accountability, transparency, and clear guidelines for the Pardons and Parole Board. We must allow compassionate early release for inmates who are terminally ill, or elderly, who no longer pose a threat to society. To keep our communities safer, we support effective and proven re-entry programs, which include housing and employment assistance, to help those released from prison to reintegrate into society and to reduce recidivism.

While we support the rights of law-abiding gun owners, we cannot ignore the epidemic of gun violence in Alabama that is now the leading cause of death amongst our children. We must repeal the permitless concealed carry law and implement legislation to rid our communities of illegal guns and unlawful weapon modifications. We support increased investment in community policing and measures to ensure greater accountability and transparency from law enforcement. We reject racism in any form and strongly support the removal of Confederate monuments, emblems, and holidays. Further, we must eliminate racial profiling. **We know that our freedom and public safety depends on an unbiased and lawful justice system that is applied to all of us equally, without prejudice, fear, or favor.**